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LIFE AND DEATH AT ST BREACA'S.

IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.—CHAPTER I.

THE Gray House stands fifty feet above the sea, on Penmaur Cliff, and looks as if it had been flung there. It is built of granite, and consists of two wings, three stories high, united by a centre one-third of their depth, and one story lower. In it is the principal entrance, and on either side of that are four small-paned sash windows. Facing the bay, the space between the wings is filled by a plain strong stone colonnade, raised two steps above the semi-natural terrace on which the house is situated. From thence, black rocks descend to a noble sea. They stretch a quarter of a mile away to the south, and a mile to the west, where they give way to the small fishing-town of St Breaca's in Cornwall.

In the year 1795, a picturesque old native, by name Dan Quick, returned from forty years' wandering, no one knew where, and with money which every one believed to have been amassed irregularly, built the Gray House. It was large enough to accommodate ten persons. He took two to live with him: an ancient sister, his only surviving kin; and Sam Williams, an active orphan lad, who hit his fancy. After his own fashion, he settled himself comfortably: filled a large kitchen with domestic conveniences, and made a parlour quaint with curiosities, savage and civilised; provided his sister Peggy with a tent bedstead with printed linen hangings; and slung hammocks for the boy and himself. He was an object of curiosity, and fear even, to the townspeople; and of suspicion to the coastguard; but for twenty years he baffled the former, and did not infringe the laws which the latter were appointed to enforce. The keeping the house as neat and clean as a man-of-war, shooting sea-fowl, managing a couple of boats, and fishing, filled his time. Peggy died in the eighteenth year of their residence: he buried her in the garden, in a coffin made by himself and Sam; paid her trim grave a visit before breakfast every morning, and smoked his last pipe there the night before he died,

two years after her. Sam missed his early foot-fall, and found that he had passed quietly, while sleeping, into the unseen world. The curate of the parish had called on him once, and been, as he conceived, discouraged. The Wesleyans, more zealous, or more persevering, had paid him many visits, and addressed to him many stirring exhortations, which had elicited only sarcasms. The sole clue found by his fellow-men to the state of his conscience was in his will. He provided for being laid decently by Peggy; left one hundred pounds, his boats, furniture, curiosities, and clothes to Sam; and bequeathed his remaining property—the Gray House and three thousand pounds in the funds—to the king, with the remark that he had the best right to it.

The Gray House was shut up, the site of the garden graves lost, the wind and sea-fowl broke most of the windows; and as no railways gave facilities to tourists, and Cornwall was then very much off the world's highway, Dan Quick's residence remained for many years as solitary as his inner life had been.

St Breaca's had known better days. Architects point to striking beauties in the church, built in the thirteenth century; but as a piece of preferment, the incumbency cannot be called valuable, though its income has been augmented by a grant from Queen Anne's Bounty. This ecclesiastical promotion was obtained about the year 1826 by the Rev. Marcus Secker. Three years previously, he had been appointed curate of St Breaca's, St Mary's in the Mines, and St Ann's on the Moor. The three parishes lay wide of one another, so wide as to involve a hebdomadal walk of ten miles, in order to give, according to agreement, and for a stipend of seventy-five pounds, one full service in two each Sunday, and prayers in a third. Mr Secker decided that this had been endured too long; and, being talented always, and occasionally judicious and conciliating, he worked upon the bishop and archdeacon to effect a change. St Breaca's became a perpetual curacy, with one hundred and twenty pounds per annum; St Mary's and St Ann's fell to another labourer.

Mr Secker was one among several officers in the army who, at the close of the Peninsular War, felt themselves called to spiritual leadership. Not that he was 'serious,' but that he was versatile. First a spoiled boy, and then a spoiled man, he had bought a commission in the line, after a fond widowed mother had prepared him liberally for the medical profession. Four years' experience of the delights of dépôts and garrison towns satisfied him that he was tired of the army, and fit for something better. He had made himself a favourite of Dr Sophton, the Bishop of Merton, who believed that his penetration detected a theological bias in the handsome young soldier. He offered to ordain him without university education, on condition of his residing three years under his eye.

Mr Secker was pleased with the proposition. It was complimentary; it commended itself to his taste and imagination: A bishop who was a gentleman combined in himself all social perfections: blended refinement, dignity, and learning, with delicate zest for the indispensable duties of hospitality. Mr Secker saw himself a bishop in no very remote future, accepted the offer, and developed gracefully into the clerical aspirant. He passed through his probation delightfully, and charmed a brilliant circle, assembled on the occasion at the palace, by the success of his début. His first sermon, adapted safely from an old Catholic divine, was delivered faultlessly; his melodious voice and fine ear made his reading perfect; and his splendid dark eyes were capable of every variety of expression. Nevertheless, equally to his annoyance and astonishment, he was appointed to the obscure curacy of Willowlea, in Lincolnshire. There was no consolation but in believing that jealousy of his superior powers had banished him thither, and in perceiving that many regrets would follow him. The Misses Sophton indeed excused themselves, on various pretexts, from wishing him good-bye publicly; and avoided being seen by each other for some hours after his departure. When they met, they were all silent in his regard, for each pitied her sisters for their infatuation, believing that she was herself the object of his warm attachment, and that diffidence about his prospects alone prevented his declaring his passion.

He did not stay longer at Willowlea than to get his title. There was no society, and he could not exist without it. He must have died, he said he thought, but for the excitement of fighting the Wesleyans, who were numerous and respectable in his parish. He wrote pungent pamphlets at them; reviled them in his pulpit; called the local preacher 'a prig-eared, hypocritical, sneaking snip;' and behaved otherwise so intemperately, that by the time he left Willowlea, the place had become 'too hot to hold him.' He thought himself fortunate in being chosen to be curate of Somerton, a parish adorned by the residence of a peer of the realm, and families likely to appreciate what he called his 'knowledge of the pulses and passions of high life.'

It was curious that Mr Secker had all this time remained a bachelor. He might, over and over again, have made his fortune in the matrimonial market. Perhaps it was because of the easiness of the step that he was careless about it. At last, he pronounced himself actually in love with one of

the half-dozen daughters of an old naval officer. They sat in the pew under the reading-desk, looking like a bunch of wild roses, and the youngest and shyest caught his eye and what heart he had, as she drank in with wonder and admiration a sermon (a piracy) which he was delivering admirably. He, one of the most artificial of men, decided on the spot that he would, with as little delay as possible, marry Nannie Gray, a simple, modest country-girl, who thought it a tremendous thing to go out to tea in Somerton; who had no fortune, and was twenty years younger than himself. His income at the time was one hundred and twenty pounds; his respectable patrimony had melted away, he knew not how, for he was utterly ignorant of, and indifferent to, the value of money; and he owed about two hundred pounds, which he had not the remotest prospect of paying. It was, however, alas! easy to blind honest Captain Gray, who had never deceived anybody. He and his wife thought Nannie fortunate. They had not a penny to give her; and, by their humble standard, one hundred and twenty pounds, and the vicarage to live in, seemed ample provision. They had no debts; they practised self-denial and were industrious; and it did not occur to them that a clergyman, a gentleman, and one who evidently stood well in society far above their own, could stoop to deceive them. It is but justice to Mr Secker to say that he did not think he was deceiving them; he meant to cherish their daughter, to improve her immensely, and to fit her to share with him that preferment for which he felt himself as surely destined as—in his own estimation—he was undeniably qualified.

Nannie was not in love, and probably she never would have been; she was one of the women whose deepest affections are all reserved for their children; but she thought Mr Secker the most gifted and perfect of men, and accepted his offer as great promotion, and the earnest of sure protection for life. She only sighed to think how unworthy she must always be of such a husband, and marvelled honestly what he could see in her. Poor little thing! When she had been married a month, she knew that he was in difficulties, that he despised and was ashamed of her family, that her ignorance of conventional usages irritated him, and that his violent suspicious temper made him sometimes positively cruel. And she was hardly seventeen when this 'iron entered into her soul.'

It was not long before Mr Secker became so obnoxious to his vicar, that he was dismissed from Somerton, and the fact involved exposure of the real state of his affairs. A few old friends, and some persons who admired and pitied his pretty, gentle, young wife, paid his debts, and obtained another curacy for him. It was, however, less valuable, for the vicar resided; and the curate, with the same stipend as at Somerton, had to provide himself with a dwelling. He, however, scouted economy. When poor Nannie, trembling, remonstrated, he desired her, savagely, to be silent. 'What could she, the daughter of a beggarly half-pay officer, know of the wants—the absolute necessities required by a gentleman? She would be glad—he saw through it all—to pull him down to the true quarter-deck level; but it would not do. He would have wine, and clean linen every day—twice a week, indeed!—and he should continue to order the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh*, and to

have a weekly paper. It was all very fine for her—she had not a soul above saucepans—to hint at doing without this, and that, and the other. He desired to have it distinctly understood that he would brook no interference.

But it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright; and as year succeeded year, and preferment did not come, and creditors clamoured, and Mr Secker felt privations in spite of himself, he sank socially, and made his wife, while her soul sickened, give evasive answers to tradespeople; and sometimes, worse even, compelled her to write pitiful letters, asking help from people whom they knew but by name. Perhaps the answers were harsh, or reproachful; they implied that a wife who knew her duty, was self-denying, and a good manager, would make Mr Secker's income sufficient; and that she ought not to make appeals derogatory to her husband's position. And she had half-starved herself, and been often, often cold from insufficient clothing! She said nothing; but prayed a great deal, read comforting passages in the Psalms and Gospels, and hid weeping eyes in her lovely little children's plump shoulders, and wondered what was to become of them all. Mr Secker was essentially touchy and quarrelsome. No consideration of expediency or gratitude could prevent his expressing, as offensively as possible, his conviction that he had been ill used or insulted. No one had experienced this more frequently than his diocesan, who had been specially kind to him. Mr Secker's conduct to him became at length so insolent, that self-respect, and respect for his own position, made it imperative on the bishop to punish him. On his throwing up his curacy in a fit of pique, Dr Verity refused to license him to another, or to countersign his testimonials; but he stated that he would not put any obstacle in the way of his giving temporary assistance to clergymen willing to employ him. His sentiments on the occasion were conveyed in the following note:

MY LORD—In submitting to the sentence your lordship has been pleased to pronounce on me, I have the lofty satisfaction of knowing that it is not in any man's power to deprive me of my claim to be considered a gentleman; and I do not disguise from myself the fact that I should have been more acceptable to your lordship if destitute of pretensions to social standing and good descent. There are men so essentially low that they cannot forgive another for possessing superior advantages. I shall not avail myself of the permission to exercise my sacred calling in the way your lordship indicates. The consequences to my unoffending wife and children, I lay at the door of your lordship's conscience; and I am, my lord, your lordship's most obedient servant,

MARCUS SECKER.

Mr Secker read this astounding document to his bewildered wife, who dared not express her opinion of it; and, looking like one who had relieved his mind of a heavy burden, or settled a vexed question, went blithely to post it. It was by no means the most intolerable letter he had inflicted on the bishop, a learned, kind-hearted man, and perfectly innocent of any assumption that could palliate an attack on his origin. He read it quietly, and handed it to his secretary, remarking: 'Now, that man is not mad enough to be placed in confinement, and yet it would be, in the fullest sense,

uncharitable to treat him as of sound mind; in fact, he is certainly not. For the sake of gratifying his malignity—which really I cannot charge myself with having provoked—he throws up all his prospects for life, and makes his family paupers.' The good old gentleman had it intimated to Mrs Secker that if she could work on her husband to apologise, or to let her apologise for him, he would recommend him into another diocese—where, possibly, he might do better—and contribute towards the payment of debts and the expenses of removal. When Mr Secker had relieved himself of an atrocious letter, as well as when his ebullitions of temper had wrung his wife's heart, and terrified his little children into shrieks, he overflowed with amiable emotions. He accepted Dr Verity's benevolence, and wrote:

MY LORD—You have 'heaped coals of fire on my head.' I cannot lie as low in your lordship's eyes as I am in my own; but you can exercise a vast benignity, and, preferring mercy to justice, forgive, my lord, your lordship's most grateful and devoted humble servant,
MARCUS SECKER.

So, in the year of our Lord 1823, Mr Secker arrived at St Breaca's, and took the small shabby house at the corner of High Street and Water Lane, at a rent of twelve pounds, rates and taxes not included, and was in a few weeks settled in it, with his wife, seven children, and a scrub of a local servant-girl at a shilling a week; and he remarked complacently and truly that, the poverty notwithstanding, there was a certain something about the establishment which made it evident that the dwellers there were a gentleman's family. It did not occur to him that this was mostly due to the industry and exquisite domestic skill of the patient, loving wife and mother, who sat up late and rose early, and did 'him good and not evil all the days of her life.'

CHAPTER II.

'I'm the most unfortunate man in the world,' said Sir Geoffrey Monsey to his wife. 'No one hates trouble more than I do; no one interferes less with others. I hate politics, I hate business, I hate family troubles, and they are all thrust upon me.' Sir Geoffrey was a handsome man of sixty, with a fine unencumbered property; and, save annual liability to hay-fever, excellent health; but he uttered this lamentation at breakfast in his grand old country-house, on a lovely June morning.

'Never mind the politics,' returned Lady Monsey: 'you have decided not to stand again for North-shand.'

'Yes; thank Heaven! But I shudder at the bare recollection of the canvassing and noise, and dining and bills. I never would have borne it, but for you; and how I did bear it, and why you made me submit to it, I have never understood.'

'What makes you think of so many grievances this morning?'

'My letters;' and he sighed so sadly, that the wife, who had all the energy and purpose that he had not, and who had understood and loved him for five-and-twenty years, felt that he had a real vexation, and looked at him kindly and questioningly. 'Yes; here they are. By-the-bye—it is not to the purpose, but Honoria is to be married next

week, and they want me at the wedding. I asked Thompson if I had any clothes fit to go in, and he said: "No, Sir Geoffrey; you have hardly any clothes fit for a gentleman."

'You have spoiled him.—What did you say?'

'Say! I said: "Then why don't you order me some? You don't expect me to take the trouble to order my own clothes, do you?"'

It was told in such simplicity that Lady Monsey could not help smiling; but he did not perceive it, and went on.

'I have a letter from my unfortunate brother Arthur.'

'Where is he?'

'At Baden, but coming to England directly. He says he cannot live abroad any longer—that he is tired of it—that his children want education—that he cannot afford to give it them—that his income must be increased—and that he looks to me, as the boy is my heir. Of course, he cares nothing about the children; he is dunned, and he wants to make sure of cigars and brandy, and a cook. He talks of bringing his family to Dover, and leaving them there, while he comes here to see what I mean to do for him.'

'That must be prevented.'

'Certainly. He might have delirium tremens in the house; and, besides, his conduct to me has been invariably so atrocious that I will hold no personal communication with him.'

'How soon can the yacht be ready?'

'I believe she is ready now. Dare wanted to start next week: he thinks the weather is settled; but as I had had no hay-fever, I thought of waiting.'

'Do you not think we had better go at once? Your brother could not follow you. Tell him that your letters will be forwarded.'

'Yes; but I must have some plan.'

'True; I have been expecting this; and I think you had better promise to double his income, and send the boy to Eton; provided that he, Arthur, will live where you choose—in England, if he will.'

'I can do that,' said Sir Geoffrey; 'but I am certain he will try to force himself here. He has lost all self-respect, all gentlemanlike feeling.'

'He may not. His wife has, at any rate, behaved well since her marriage; and whatever her faults have been, she no doubt loves her children, and she may try to make him do what is best for them. She must have some sort of influence over him.'

Lady Monsey sighed. It seemed to her so hard that the reckless, worthless, younger brother had children, and she had none; hard that those children had a bad father, when Sir Geoffrey would have been such a good one; hard that they had a mother whose name had been breathed on, while she was unimpeachable.

The schooner-yacht *Zephyr* was ready. Sir Geoffrey had said that he knew every nook of the Mediterranean, and would cruise off the Cornish and Devonshire coast, which he had never seen, and Captain Dare knew well. Off Land's End, the vessel suffered material injury in a squall, and there was no resource but to put into St Breaca's for repairs. Sir Geoffrey availed himself of the occasion to grumble. He did not dispute the beauty of the little harbour, but he was certain that St Breaca's smelled of fish; that there could be no decent inn; that there was nothing for it

but to post home as fast as possible, and rush, perhaps, into his brother Arthur's arms. Lady Monsey represented that the accommodation could not possibly be worse than they had often put up with on the continent; that if they could only get rooms, they had on board wherewith to make them habitable; that he would infallibly have hay-fever if he left the coast; that they could amuse themselves very well there for a fortnight; and that it had been often the unexpressed desire of her heart to become acquainted with Cornwall and the Cornish. So, as usual, he groaned, and yielded, and regretted the concession ultimately so little, that he staid a month, and commenced negotiating for the purchase of the old Gray House. He thought it capable of being made a very pleasant temporary seaside residence, and that if he were disappointed in it, he could let his brother Arthur have it.

St Breaca's had never been so stirred. The yacht was a gem, and the clever shipwrights were enthusiastic about her. Mrs Rowe of *The Georgie* had 'real people of quality in the house, and so affable, to be sure.' All the women admired Sir Geoffrey; and the men said they felt they could do anything for Lady Monsey. Mr Secker cannot be classed. His imagination had been fluttered. Next day would be Sunday. He selected two of his best sermons. They would be at church once at least, probably in the morning, and come to the vestry after service, and ask him to dinner: he should go, of course. Poor Nannie would fidget about his cotton pocket-handkerchiefs, clumsy shoes, and so on. It was impossible to make any one, born and brought up as she—dear creature!—had been, understand that a perfect gentleman could afford to be shabby. If her poor father had been going to dine with a baronet, he would have dressed himself so as to look quite new, and have felt that he had no social standing but what he owed to his clothes. The little-great people of the town would see how the Sir Geoffreys regarded Mr Secker, the poor parson, though he had not their mine-and-fish-bought finery. How he should enjoy being once more in good society! How had he dragged on for weary years, away from the polished men, the fascinating, perfectly feminine women, with whom he had been born to be familiar! Sir Geoffrey and Lady Monsey would understand it all, and feel for him. Perhaps they had church preferment in their gift. Here nature welled up, and his eyes grew moist, and he said aloud: 'My blessed, blessed, patient wife, you should not then be such a slave, and my precious darlings should have all the advantages they ought to have; and they would know how the fond, foolish, passionate father loved them.' And he went into the parlour, and played with the baby—no one could go that better than he—and talked innocent nonsense to all, building vicarages in the air, till Mrs Secker said: 'I have often and often wondered if I should ever go up that hill again' [St Breaca's is in a deep valley]: 'it seems impossible, we are so completely out of the world; but as long as we have the dear children, it does not signify where we live.'

Sir Geoffrey and Lady Monsey did ask Mr Secker to dine on that Sunday, and often afterwards. All his dormant social talents woke under congenial influences. Sir Geoffrey said: 'It is really a pity that man is buried here. He is a

gentleman; he reads well, preaches well, and, a few crotchets apart, talks well. He should have had St Cuthbert's, if I had not given it away: I am sorry for it. He must be half-starved here. The loaves and fishes of the establishment are very unequally distributed.'

TERRESTRIAL MAGNETISM.

ONE of those periods is now approaching when the earth is thrilled through her whole frame by magnetic throes of unusual intensity. Physicists will be able to trace in the silent indications of the suspended magnet the action of the most remarkable of all the forces to which the earth is subjected. In telegraphic offices, the occurrence of these disturbances will be made apparent by the interruption of communication for longer or shorter intervals of time. And the self-recording instruments at Kew and other such observatories will indicate by unusual movements the progress of those mysterious electric convulsions known as magnetic storms. But except for such indications as these, and one or two others which have only of late years been referred to the agency of terrestrial magnetism, the inhabitants of this earth will not be made sensibly aware that anything unusual is in progress. For ages these magnetic disturbances have thrilled through the earth's framework without being recognised; and even now it seems almost as by an accident that our physicists have been led to understand the significance of one of the most remarkable of all terrestrial phenomena.

The facts which have been ascertained respecting terrestrial magnetism are so interesting and so little known, that we may confidently claim the attention of the reader while we state some of the most striking and noteworthy of them.

The most generally recognised property of the magnet, its power of indicating the north point, was discovered by the Chinese many ages before it became known to European observers. We learn that the Chinese, when journeying over the great plains of Central Asia, used a magnetic car, in front of which a floating needle bore a figure, whose outstretched arm pointed continually southwards. The Greeks and Romans were aware that iron could be magnetised; but it never happened that a suitably balanced fragment of magnetised iron exhibited to them the earth's directive force. Humboldt remarks that 'on this accidental circumstance alone the great discovery depended.' It must be remarked, however, that such accidents have been common in the history of discovery and invention.

Had the western nations discovered the magnet's principal property so early as the Chinese, we should probably have gained valuable information respecting the next property which has to be considered—the fact, namely, that the magnet does not commonly point due north. It is not likely that the Chinese discovered this property, because over the whole of Eastern Asia the magnetic compass points very nearly towards the north. But even if they had, it is not so much the divergence of the compass from the north point which would have rendered the discovery interesting to us, as the knowledge which ancient observations might have given us respecting the laws on which the changes of that divergence depend. In Europe,

as we shall presently see, these changes are very conspicuous.

It was in the thirteenth century that European observers first detected the fact that the magnetic needle does not point due north.* For a long time it was supposed that the direction of the needle was the same for all places; but during the first voyage of Christopher Columbus across the Atlantic it was found that this is not the case. He had travelled six hundred miles from the most westerly of the Canary Islands, when he noticed that the compass, which had been pointing towards the east of north when he was in Europe, was now pointing due north. The actual day on which the discovery was made was September 13, 1492. As he sailed farther west he found that the westerly declination gradually increased.

But here we have at once to call attention to another peculiarity of the magnetic compass, otherwise the reader would form a mistaken notion of the present nature of the needle's declination. We have spoken of the needle as pointing to the east of north in 1492. This is no longer a true description of the declination in Europe. The needle now points far to the west of north. It is a peculiarity of the science of terrestrial magnetism that variations are thus mixed up with variations, until it has become a matter of exceeding difficulty to present all the facts of the science in such a sequence that the student shall not be in any risk of being led astray. Properly speaking, the change of the needle's declination from time to time should be kept wholly separate from the changes which are noticed as the needle is changed from place to place. Yet, if this were done in describing the original discovery of the latter change, erroneous impressions would be given respecting the present state of the needle's declination in various countries.

At present, the terrestrial globe may be looked upon as divided into two vast but unequal portions, which may be called the region of westerly magnets and the region of easterly magnets. In the former must be included all Europe, except the extreme north-easterly parts of Russia, the whole of Africa, Turkey, Arabia, the greater part of the Indian Ocean, and the western parts of Australia. Returning westwards, we must add to the region of westerly magnets the greater part of the Atlantic Ocean, the north-eastern parts of Brazil, the eastern parts of Canada, and the whole of Greenland. All the rest of the world belongs to the region of easterly magnets except an oval space, which is situated in the very middle of the region, yet has a contrary character. This space includes the eastern parts of China, Manchouria, and the islands of Japan.

Such is the present arrangement of the two divisions; but fifty years ago, the description would have been incorrect, and fifty years hence it will again be so; for over the whole world the declination is steadily changing—here in one direction, there in the contrary; quickly at some places, almost imperceptibly at others. And we may mention in passing, that, as a general rule, where the declination is least either westwards or eastwards, there it is changing most rapidly; and

* It may be well to notice a certain peculiarity about the nomenclature of this deviation. Seamen always call it the needle's *variation*; but among scientific men it is called the *declination*.

where it is greatest, it is hardly changing at all. But there appear to be some places where the range of change is so small, that, though the declination is never large, it does not change rapidly—as in other places of small declination. As yet, however, much remains to be learned respecting the progress of these strange changes in countries where magnetic observations have been only commenced in recent times.

Some idea of the complexity of the question will be suggested by comparing the changes which have occurred in two places so near to each other as London and Paris. We shall see that not only are the declinations different in these cities, but their range of variation is different, both as to extent and as to the period in which a complete oscillation of the needle is effected.

The easterly declination of the needle in London was observed to disappear in about the year 1657. From that epoch, the needle continually travelled westwards, until it began to be thought that it would move ever in that direction, and so come at length to point southwards. In Paris, the easterly declination had not disappeared before the year 1663, and there also the needle travelled continually westwards, though not quite so rapidly as in London. In 1814, the needle pointed about $22\frac{1}{2}$ degrees towards the west in Paris, and some two degrees farther west in London. In that year, however, Arago startled the scientific world by announcing that in his opinion the needle's westerly motion was flagging, and he asserted his belief that that motion would presently give place to an easterly movement. Only three years passed before the prediction was fulfilled; and on the 10th of April 1817, Arago was able to announce that the needle had begun to return towards the north. But observers in London pronounced against this view. The London needles were still travelling westwards, though with a slowly diminishing motion. It was not until the spring of 1819 that the London observers admitted that the needles had really reached the limit of their westerly oscillation. And whereas in Paris the needles had not travelled more than $22\frac{1}{2}$ degrees towards the west, in London they had passed no less than 25 degrees from the north point. Corresponding to this circumstance, we see also that the duration of the half-oscillation (for the needles had not been watched from their greatest easterly declinations) was a hundred and sixty-two years in London, and a hundred and fifty-four years in Paris.

It gives a grand idea of the nature of those ever-acting forces to which terrestrial magnetism is due, to consider that the sway of the magnetic needle from limit to limit of its range should occupy so long an interval as three centuries in both these instances. Conceive the scale on which a pendulum should be constructed in order that its oscillations might have a period of as many seconds!

It was while they were engaged in tracking the progress of this long oscillation, that physicists detected minute oscillations superposed, so to speak, upon the main one, and even more singular in their character. The case is somewhat as though to the bob of a long pendulum there were attached a short one, and that it was to the motions of this short pendulum (beating with its own rapid swing, while carried slowly backwards and forwards by the main movement) that attention was primarily directed.

Each day the magnetic needle sways backwards and forwards *twice* across its mean position. Shortly before midnight, it begins to travel from west to east, reaching the limit of that motion soon after eight in the morning. Then it sweeps westward to its greatest westerly limit, which it reaches soon after one. Then back again towards the east, until half-past eight, and so to its original position at about eleven o'clock.

It must be understood that these motions are so minute in comparison with the great secular oscillation, that they never affect the general direction of the magnet to any noteworthy extent. For instance, we have just spoken of the two easterly limits of the daily swing, but throughout the day the magnet always points far to the west of north. The mean declination, in fact, is (roughly) about 20 degrees, whereas the daily swing never ranges over more than the fifth part of a degree.

It will be noticed that the oscillations above described correspond closely with the diurnal motions of the sun. They are such, in fact, as the needle would exhibit on the supposition that it tries to follow the sun during his complete apparent revolution round the celestial sphere. It is believed that the daily motions of flowers, and in particular that class of motion which has given to the sun-flower its distinctive appellation, are due to the same magnetic properties which cause the diurnal swing of the suspended needle.

But besides the daily sway of the magnetic needle, there is an annual oscillation of a somewhat different character. In fact, properly speaking, the annual change is not oscillatory, though it has a regularly recurrent character. The daily swing is variable. Now, this variability would be somewhat confusing, on account of its general irregularity; therefore, physicists consider the mean of several days, and thus get rid of what for the present we may term accidental variations. When this has been done, it is found that the average daily swing of the needle is subject to a slow progressive increase, followed by an equally slow diminution; and the period of these slow changes is a year.

The peculiarity of this annual change is that its progress is the same for both hemispheres. It might have been expected that it would attain its maximum in summer, when the solar influence is strongest; but this is not the case. It attains its maximum in January, which is indeed near mid-summer for the southern hemisphere, but nearly the least sunny of our northern months. The secret of this peculiarity lies in the fact that the sun is nearest to the earth in January. The peculiarity is a very meaning one, as shewing that the magnetic influence is not a local matter, however variable the magnetic declination may be as we shift from place to place. The real fact pointed to by this, as by many other phenomena, is, that the earth must be looked upon as a single gigantic magnet, gaining or losing power throughout its whole frame simultaneously.

The consideration of the *power* of the great earth-magnet must be for a moment laid on one side, while we deal with a form of deviation as remarkable as the declination. We refer to the *dip* of the needle. The ordinary compass is, we know, suspended horizontally, and, for anything which appears to the contrary when we examine such an instrument, that might be the needle's position

of rest. But when a needle is so suspended by a silken thread as to be free to assume an inclined position, it is found that the northern end dips perceptibly. We are assuming, of course, that in its non-magnetised state the needle would rest horizontally. In our latitudes, the dip or inclination is so great that the needle is inclined only about 22 degrees to the vertical. When we travel northwards, the dip increases; when southwards, it diminishes, until we reach a place near the equator (travelling always, it is assumed, in the longitude of London) where the needle becomes horizontal. After passing that point, the southern end dips, and the inclination continues to increase as we travel southwards.

The same is true for other longitudes, only the place of 'no dip' is differently situated. The line along which there is no inclination lies near the equator, crossing that circle at two opposite points, one in west longitude 3 degrees, the other in east longitude 177 degrees. The magnetic equator is not a strictly circular curve, however; it is noteworthy that it departs most from the figure of a true circle where it traverses the Atlantic Ocean.

We have seen the variations which are exhibited in the declination of the magnet, not only at different places, but at different times in the same place. Changes of precisely the same character are exhibited in the dip of the magnet: in London, for example, the dip has diminished four degrees in less than a century; in Paris, during the last two centuries, the dip has diminished about seven degrees.

Seeing this, we must accept with some little question the locales usually assigned to the magnetic poles; because we have every reason for supposing that these poles must be continually shifting their position. In fact, the motion of the magnetic equator, which is continually sweeping from east to west along the true equator, suffices of itself to demonstrate that the magnetic poles are continually travelling around the true poles. What the laws of this motion may be, it would not be easy to determine in the present state of our knowledge; but it is worthy of notice that the same motion would serve to account at once for the change of dip and for the change of declination. For example, in 1663 the magnetic pole may be reasonably supposed to have been due north of Paris. In the latter year, the inclination was 75 degrees in Paris, so that we can judge that the magnetic pole was on the nearer side of the true pole. As the magnetic pole passed away from this position, travelling westwards, there would naturally result both a westerly declination and a gradual diminution of dip. And the fact that when Sir J. C. Ross determined the position of the northern pole in 1837, it was found to be somewhat more than 90 degrees west of the longitude of Paris—in other words, the fact that it had traversed somewhat more than a quarter of a complete revolution soon after the westerly declination at Paris had attained its maximum value—seems strikingly confirmatory of this view. If this theory is correct, the inclination will continue to diminish until the magnetic pole has completed half a revolution, so as to be again due north of Paris, but on the further side of the true pole. Then the declination will be nothing, and it will afterwards become easterly.

It must be admitted, however, that there is

much more complexity in the laws according to which the declination varies, than the above view, taken alone, would imply. Doubtless, the peculiarities of the earth's structure, the arrangement of land and water, mountain-ranges, table-lands, and valleys, have much to do with the matter.

The variations of the intensity of magnetic action, either from time to time, or as we proceed from place to place, are among the most interesting of all the phenomena of terrestrial magnetism. The latter class of change is associated so obviously with the changes of declination and dip, that we need not enter on its consideration. The former, however, points to problems of extreme interest in connection with the probable character and source of the whole range of forces included under the subject we are dealing with.

We have seen already that from hour to hour, and from day to day, there are changes in the extent of the minute oscillations of the suspended magnet, and that these changes indicate variations in the intensity of the magnetic force under diurnal and annual solar influences. When we add to these variations a change which has a period corresponding to the motions of the moon, it becomes evident that it is to an influence as subtle and as pervading in its character as gravitation itself, that the terrestrial magnet owes its powers.

But there are other variations still more significant.

A long series of researches had convinced Colonel Sabine, one of our leading authorities on the subject of terrestrial magnetism, that the intensity of the magnetic action is subject to a process of change having a period of somewhat more than ten years. Scarcely had this law been established, when the results of a long and elaborate series of solar observations exhibited to the world the strange fact, that the spots which stain the sun's face vary in frequency according to a precisely similar relation. It was found that the changes of solar spottiness, and of magnetic intensity of action, are not merely characterised by an equality of period, but that the maximum effect under one period is absolutely coincident with the maximum effect under the other.

We might have looked upon this as merely a very singular coincidence, had we not independent evidence of an association between the sun's action and the intensity of terrestrial magnetism. Part of this evidence has been already referred to. But the evidence founded on the exact coincidence of magnetic storms, thrilling in a moment through the whole frame of the earth, with solar disturbances actually witnessed by astronomical observers, is even more striking. Thus, no room is left to question the dependence of terrestrial magnetism on solar action, and the relation between the sun's spots and the vibrations of the needle—a relation which, when first propounded, was received even by eminent physicists with ridicule—has been accepted as one of the most well established of all the circumstances known respecting terrestrial magnetism. Of the meaning of this singular relation, we have not at present space to speak; indeed, we should be led into a variety of considerations, which would be out of place in such a paper as the present. The appearance presented by the solar spots, the processes by which they are formed, the laws on which their changes depend—all these, and many other questions of the sort,

would have to be dealt with, to say nothing of the planetary movements on which, according to modern researches, the habitudes of the solar atmosphere are dependent. We may note, in conclusion, that the solar face has recently presented all the signs which we have learned to associate with the intenser phases of terrestrial magnetic action. Enormous spots and clusters of spots have broken out during the past few months; and probably the spots which will shortly make their appearance will be yet larger, since the epoch of maximum disturbance has not yet been fully reached.

A COUNTY FAMILY.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—THE TEMPTATION.

If the sentimental emotions evoked in Mr William Blackburn with reference to his late wife were more powerful than we might have been led to expect, they were not, on the other hand, lasting, for, after a very brief retirement, he came forth and joined the rest of the party in the garden without the least sign of his recent depression; nay, he was even in high spirits—clumsily brisk,—grotesquely genial, like some wild animal whose vagaries would not be unamusing, if one could only be certain how they would end. 'Is this, now,' thought Mr Waller, smiling encouragingly at his young friend, 'merely the effect of his favourite stimulant, or does he wish to shew me that what I have just seen in him was only a momentary weakness?'

Lucy also secretly regarded him with a shuddering interest she had never experienced before. She had long been in possession of her father's scheme, of course, but he had not directly confided it to her. She had not pictured to herself the actual possibility of this man's being her lord and master. Doubtless, the reader has seen a parallel case, for there are many such in good society (indeed they are most numerous in the best); but if not, let him imagine how much more noteworthy the gambols of the Greater Ape would appear to him in its cage in the Regent's Park, if it were enacted that, after a certain time, the creature should exercise a personal authority over *him*. She wondered what arrangement had just been made by her father with this man in yonder room, and augured ill for herself from Mr William's boisterous mirth. Ellen on her part was scarcely in lighter mood than her friend; she had told Lucy of Denton's visit that morning—but that young lady was at present unable to enlighten her as to its cause, and this filled her with vague alarms. Stanhope was, for some reason best known to himself, by no means at his ease—nor had he been so of late when Ellen and Lucy were present, so that on Mr Waller and William devolved the task that day of making conversation, and what is vulgarly called 'doing the agreeable.' It was as though for some evening party too fashionable to amuse themselves, the most accomplished singer or elegant pianist had been engaged, and also a gentleman whose only art was to stick pins into the fleshy part of his legs, or draw yards of tape out of his mouth—although it must be granted that Mr William was certainly no conjurer. It would have been much more difficult, however, even under less adverse circumstances, to make

time pass at the Fishery than at the Manor. There was not room and verge enough in their present picturesque but contracted position to do as they pleased; all were thrown together in that narrow space, and except for the malady of the sea, might almost as well have been fellow-passengers ship-bored, compared with whom all companies ashore, even in their quarter of an hour before dinner, or when enjoying a 'little music' afterwards, are hilarity itself.

When the postman came that afternoon, who took away with him a letter (with an enclosure) in Mr Waller's fine flowing and yet business hand, he brought one of a different appearance for Stanhope. To judge by its superscription, which was 'Mr Stanhope, Esq., care of Mr Blackburn, Esq.,' it had been written with a skewer, and excited, in that dearth of subjects of interest, quite a topic of conversation as to whom such an eccentric correspondent might be.

Mr Waller opined that it was a love-letter from some young lady of rank whose education had been neglected.

'More likely,' observed dull William cunningly, 'it's from one of his turf friends.'

'Who uses, characteristically, a horse's shoe-nail, instead of a steel pen,' added Stanhope good humouredly.

He read it and crumpled it up in his pocket, carelessly saying that Blackburn was so far right—that it was a begging-letter from poor old Jerry the card-seller, who had come to grief.

'Why, you don't mean to say that any one begs of you?' was Mr William's coarse rejoinder; and so the matter ended.

But when the long afternoon came to its close at last, and the visitors had departed, taking Mrs Blackburn with them—whom they had persuaded with difficulty to be their guest for the next day at least—Stanhope took no further pains to hide that something had annoyed him deeply; and the more he shewed it, the higher Mr William's spirits rose. As he watched him involuntarily take out again and again the missive he had received, only to thrust it back into his pocket with a muttered curse, he chuckled to himself and whistled merrily. 'Uncle Dean has done the trick,' thought he. 'O yes, it's a begging-letter, right enough; but it has none of old Jerry's whine in it. It's a stand-and-deliver affair, from one of his Goodwood friends, I'll take my davy.'

And for once in his life at least Mr William might have made a statement upon oath and yet not committed perjury. It was a letter of the 'You-call-yourself-a-gentleman' sort, which those who owe debts of honour to persons of no honour, and which they are unable to pay, ought to make up their minds not to vince at; but it galled its present recipient to the quick. 'As for your being abroad, I know it's all Dawlish's gammon,' ran one of its sentences, 'and I for one am not going to be fobbed off with promises. It's true that I can't get my rights by law; but if Stokes and I—for he's my pardner—don't get our cool four thousand within the week, mind this, I'll post you.'

Presently, as they sat in the twilight over their brandy-and-water and cigars, at the open window, a boat glided slowly by up the stream.

'Now, I'll stake my life,' cried William, who was always offering this tremendous wager (as in his own idea at least it was) upon the most trifling

events, "those two young rogues there are after night-poaching."

"Very likely," answered Stanhope curtly. "I don't care a farthing whether they are or not."

"But it's my river, sir, every yard of it, from here to Mosedale."

"Then I wish 'em luck," said Stanhope, draining his glass, and mixing himself another.

"I say, what the deuce is the matter with you, old fellow?" inquired William, always conciliatory, when another shewed signs of fight. "You seem uncommon down upon your luck to-night."

"Well, my luck is rather down upon me," returned the other bitterly—"my usual luck, that is."

"Bosh! what have you got to complain of?—a handsome, gentlemanly young fellow, whom all the girls are wild for, with a fine house and an old name, and whose estate, if it is a little dipped?"

Mr William stopped; he could not quite conceal the delight he took in thus torturing his friend, and the other's eyes flashed fire.

"I have no estate, sir, as perhaps you know," said he desperately. "Read *that*," and he tossed him over Mr Stokes's pardner's letter.

"What an impudent scoundrel!" ejaculated the other, when he had mastered the contents. "Of course"—and here he lit a fresh cigar, as an excuse for not meeting his companion's gaze—"of course you'll pay the beggar off at once, and have done with him? And yet four thousand pounds is a large sum to have to pay all of a sudden."

"To me at least it is," said Stanhope sternly. "Indeed, I have not got the money."

"Not got the money?" exclaimed the other, raising his bushy eyebrows. "Dear me! What will you do, then? Bolt?"

"No; it has not come to that yet, I hope. I must raise this sum how I can. Redmoor Firgrove is still mine to sell, and that will fetch it; and in the meantime I must trouble you to advance it to me."

"The trouble would be a pleasure," said William coolly, "but, upon my life, I have not fifty pounds I can call my own. If you had asked me at breakfast-time, I might have lent you a little more, but my father-in-law that is to be was so very pressing this morning, that I had to lend it to him."

"Is this really true, Blackburn? Can you not help me in this strait at all? If you will only make the advance, I will pay you ten—twenty per cent. You know that I am one to keep my word."

"This gentleman here does not seem to know it," said William carelessly, pointing to the letter; "although I daresay what he writes is all lies."

"No; it's true," said Stanhope hoarsely, taking no notice, in his fierce excitement, of the other's irritating manner. "I believe I have been the greatest fool alive;" and he ground his teeth so that the cigar fell from his lips bitten clean through.

"I know one way, and only one, by which you may still be a rich man," said William slowly.

"To-morrow?" cried the other bitterly.

"Yes, to-morrow; that is, as soon as you like." Stanhope shook his head.

"It is not," continued the other, "the way which you have in your mind, but another way."

"What do you mean?" There was something in Blackburn's voice which, wretched as Stanhope felt, gave him a thrill of horror.

"Well, I'll tell you, upon two conditions. First,

that you don't fly into one of your foolish passions—enough to make a fellow's blood run cold to look at you; and secondly, that, whether you agree to my proposal or not, you'll keep it a secret—never breathe it to any human being—never speak about it again, even to myself, unless I ask you."

"You are mystery itself, sir," said Stanhope, forcing a laugh; "but I have no objection to agree to both your terms. It is impossible to make me more savage than I am."

"I am not so sure of that," interrupted William. "When you happen to take a different view of a thing from what another man takes, who is perhaps as good as yourself, only without the same finical notions, I have seen you burst out at him like a—like an unchained bull-dog."

"Oh, you are afraid of wounding my honour, Mr Blackburn, I perceive. Well, I think, after that infernal letter, I can bear most things. Pray, don't consider my feelings."

"Very good. And you'll keep it quiet?"

"Certainly. Why not? Secret as the dead who lie in their graves."

"Never you mind *them*," interrupted the other hastily.—"You'll never speak about the matter, even to me, whether it is agreed to or not, and you won't fly at my throat like a bull-dog?—Good. I know a way, then," and here he sank his voice, "by which you may get four thousand pounds within the week, and five times as much, and even more, when the old governor yonder," and he jerked his thumb towards the ceiling, "hops the twig."

"What do you think of *that* for a prospect? And yet it all lies within reach of your hand. Can't you guess the riddle now?"

What with his caution and his excitement, Mr William had brought himself so close to his companion that his cunning face was almost touching his, his brandied breath pervading him, his whole being anxious, as it seemed, to become one with his in rascaldom and fraud.

"I feel as if I were being tempted by the devil in person," observed Stanhope frankly; "and yet I've no conception of what you're driving at, or how what you suggest is to be effected. As for what may occur after your father's death, it would be idle, in talk with such a man as you, to conceal from motives of delicacy"—and yet, notwithstanding his words, the speaker hesitated.

Mr William nodded and rubbed his hand, as though he was being overwhelmed with compliments.

"I say, of course I am well aware that in the event of a certain contingency, which, however, may, after all, never take place."

"And which you have no desire *should* take place," struck in the other vehemently; "which you had rather did not happen, if only the desired consequence could be insured without it. Oh, I know all that; I have watched you, I have marked you, my friend. I am not such a fool as I look, not such a fool as you and some others have been in the habit of taking me for." And as Mr William spoke those words, he really did not look like a fool, but resembled a sharp and exceptionally malignant Satyr. "When a chap's sweet upon a gal himself," continued he, with his finger at his nose, to impart additional significance to his philosophy, "then his eyes are sharpest to see through other chaps as have *their* fancies."

"Really, Mr Blackburn, these sagacious reflections

are entirely thrown away upon me,' said Stanhope carelessly, but with his face scarlet to the brow, nevertheless. 'What I was about to observe is this; that, supposing the contingency—to which no more direct allusion need be made, sir, since it is not only an impertinence to me, but an insult to one whose feelings are much more worthy of consideration—supposing the contingency to take place, then I understand as well as you do that I shall have considerable command of money. But as for these four thousand pounds within the week, I should like to know where, in the Fiend's name, are they to be found?'

'I will find them,' said Mr William triumphantly. 'When I told you I had not got them, I told you truth; but Mr Waller let fall a word to-day which assures me that I could raise them—for an intimate friend in his last extremity, that is.'

The speaker wore a look so very much out of keeping with the benevolence of his words, that Stanhope involuntarily ejaculated: 'Yes, he is the devil, and I shall presently have to sign his bond with my heart's blood.'

'You will have to sign nothing at all, my good sir,' returned the other persuasively. 'I am only about to ask you to give up something to which you have really no just claim.'

'If you refer to any hope I may entertain of securing your niece's hand, Blackburn, I promise—on the terms you mention—to forego at once all pretensions.'

'Bah! you may marry Ellen to-morrow for all I care, supposing, that is, we agree beforehand upon this little matter. I simply require of you to place in my hands—which are certainly the properest to hold it—that bit of paper which you took away with you to Curlew Hall the other day.'

'What! your father's will?'

'Yes, my father's will.'

CHAPTER XXXVIII.—AFTER NIGHT-POACHERS.

As William Blackburn uttered those last words, it seemed that Stanhope had clean forgotten his promise to keep his temper. He leaped from his chair with a great oath, and dashed his open palm against the table. But the next moment he moved slowly to the unshuttered window, and leaning his hot brow against the pane, looked out into the moonlit night in silence.

'Surely,' thought he in the bitterness of his soul, 'my degradation is now complete. For six months have I been fortune-hunting, despised by all lookers-on, and discouraged by the girl that I have made pretence to love; for six months have I been in hiding from men, such as he who has written to me to-day, and who believes me to be a liar and a thief; and now this villain here has asked my price for betraying a sick man's trust. Six months ago, I would have struck him to the earth for daring to hint as much, but now I have no such dainty sense of my own honour, and yet I am only twenty-five: I wonder what I shall be when I reach this man's age.'

'Well, Stanhope, what say you?' inquired Mr William, whose greedy eyes had followed his every movement, and were fixed upon him still, though he had to twist his own neck half round for that purpose. 'Come and sit down again, and let us talk over it quietly.'

'I can't sit down,' said Stanhope, opening the

glass door as he spoke—letting in the cool night-air, and the sweep and swirl of the stream: he felt as if he needed air, space, movement, to save him from suffocation.

'I don't like that,' said William peevishly; 'you must shut the door—one does not know who may be at some open window listening.'

'But the secret's out, isn't it?' asked Stanhope with a harsh laugh. 'You have no other piece of roguesy to propose, have you?'

'Roguesy!—who said it was roguesy? It's only natural, I suppose, that a man's only son should wish to be the custodian of the thing I spoke of, instead of a stranger.'

'Oh, it's merely a question of sentiment, is it?' rejoined the other carelessly. 'I had no idea you set so high a value upon such delicate ware.—Four thousand pounds down, did you not say, and twenty or twenty-five thousand to follow?'

'Say twenty-five,' said William, 'and one more. Upon the whole, then, you will clear thirty thousand pounds by riding home to-morrow, and bringing back with you—you know what: after that, you have only to hold your tongue.'

'It is really princely munificence,' said Stanhope in tones that mocked himself at least as much as his companion.

'It is worth my while, or else I shouldn't give it,' said the other coolly. 'You're not such a fool as to suppose I have not read the thing, and made my calculations accordingly; and indeed, I have no doubt you have done the same.'

'No, sir; curiously enough, I have omitted that precaution; and I should like to know, before giving you a final answer, how you propose to recoup yourself?'

'You had much better ask no questions,' said William significantly. 'If you are disturbed at my giving too large a sum for so slight a service, take less; or comfort yourself with the assurance that it is not I who shall have to pay it.'

'He is telling me now,' thought Stanhope, 'that he means to destroy the will, thereby making himself sole heir, and to pay me out of what is in fact his niece's money. He has made up his mind to beggar her, to begin with; and Herbert Stanhope, whom she has refused to listen to as a lover, is, he thinks, the very man to acquiesce in the arrangement. Thirty thousand pounds!—in another minute he will be proposing to make it guineas, if I will only smother the old man up-stairs. And yet, scoundrel as he is, he must have at least as bad an opinion of me as I of him. He and that imperative gentleman whose letter I have here in my pocket, have done me a good turn so far: they have made me for the first time see myself as others see me. From this night, I am no longer Squire Stanhope of Curlew Hall—shall no longer wear borrowed plumes. As this is the villain of this melodrama, let me be that less interesting character who is "poor but honest." I'll dispose of the Firgrove at once, no matter at what loss, and the rest of the property shall be advertised for sale. I'll take that will, and put it into Moffat's hands to-morrow morning for safe keeping. In the meantime, and since this is the last night I shall ever pass beneath his roof, why should I perplex this gentleman with a show of virtue?'

'My good sir,' broke forth William impatiently, 'you have not given me your answer? There is no fear but that you will keep a whole skin

in the matter; it is only my mother who knows that you have the thing in your possession, and I can answer for *her* silence. Your hesitation is altogether without reason."

"I daresay it does seem so," said Stanhope gravely. "However, the will shall pass from my keeping to-morrow, that I promise you."

"That's good!" cried William excitedly, holding out his hand, which the other took.—"To-morrow, you shall have my bond for the four thousand, and for the rest; I thought we should come to a mutual understanding, when once I could make up my mind to speak; but the fact is, you were so devilish high and mighty about that unlucky affair at Chester, that (although of course I knew it was all put on) I was almost afraid to trust you with my little plan. However, I knew you were a man of honour—not to blab if you passed your word to keep anything dark; and so I risked it."

"I am sure I am much obliged to you for your good opinion," said Stanhope curtly; "but truth is only to be expected in a man in liquor, and I'm sorry to see you don't drink."

"I never drink when I have business in hand," answered the other with a cunning wink—albeit he had already taken half a bottle of brandy—"but when it's satisfactorily concluded, I will soak with the best man alive. Come, fill your glass, and let's make a night of it—we two. I hate the night, and like to kill it!"

"The sentiment does you the greatest credit, Mr Blackburn, as indeed all your sentiments do. If you don't like darkness, let us set fire to the house, and have a good blaze. What is a little arson more or less, when one is determined to have things as we wish them?" and Stanhope burst into a fierce shout of laughter.

"I say, what the deuce is the matter with you?" inquired Mr William apprehensively. "They will be sure up-stairs to think it's me, and that I'm drunk."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Stanhope mockingly; "that is only your modest notion of what other people think of you." And again he laughed, so that the low rafters shook again. He was really getting excited, not with drink, but with the very tumult of his thoughts, which found a natural vent in this bitter raillery. It was impossible to converse soberly with such a man as his companion had shewed himself to be, and his scorn and loathing of him seemed to long for utterance in some shape.

"I do wish you would make less noise," said William petulantly; "you will really cause people to suspect something by such unusual behaviour. Even as it is, your obstinacy in keeping the door open may have done mischief. I heard something stirring in the garden just now, I thought, but of course that must be fancy."

"Why, I heard something too. Look there!"

Mr William dragged his chair from where it was, and placed it behind Stanhope's. "What!—where?" cried he, looking with terror over the other's shoulder. "I wish you'd look that window, and close the shutters, else what's the use of the candles?"

"Why, my good friend, why? I am sure, with your admirable sentiments, you cannot but be an admirer of the picturesque. I was only calling your attention to that sudden splendour of the moonbeams; a moment ago it was all gloom, and

now it is as light as day, look you. So beautiful, and yet so cold and ghastly, like the face of some dead woman."

"Be quiet, can't you; I hate such talk," cried Mr William nervously.

"But it's only moonshine, my good sir," said the other, grimly pleased to find an unexpected weapon of annoyance so ready to his hand. "You don't mean to tell me that an intellect like yours is capable of superstition? That this gutter in the candle, for instance, which some would call a winding-sheet?"

"It's that infernal window being open that does that," said William hastily.

"Of course it is; there speaks the practical philosopher. But I know men—that is, who call themselves such—who would consider it an omen—a sign that something ugly was about to happen—that Death itself was hovering about us even now. Do you know, Blackburn, I'm almost ashamed to say it, but I feel a little "all-overish" myself to-night. I think I shall go out into the air, and have a row in the skiff, to shake it off."

"What! and leave me? You wouldn't be such a beast as that, surely, when you have promised to sit up with me all night?"

"Very well, why not sit in the boat? I shall most certainly have a row;" and Stanhope rose from his chair.

"No, no," implored the other; "I can't be left alone to-night; and the skiff won't hold us—that is, it is never safe when anybody rocks it, and I know you'll rock it, because you're drunk. If we must go, let's take the punt."

"Very well, then, the punt let it be; and look you, although I am sober as a judge, I am ripe for anything to-night, except going to sleep; so let's go after those poachers." They must be somewhere between here and the mill for certain."

Stanhope, although, as he protested, quite sober, was in that state of mental excitement to which inaction is hateful, and the ordinary surroundings of life seem burdensome and oppressive. "The blind wild beast of Force that lies within the sinews of a man," was roused in him, and he would have welcomed fight and peril. Mr William's case—afraid to start on such a dangerous errand, and still more averse to be left alone, a prey to nameless terrors—was pitiable indeed; but eventually he got cap and coat, and seated himself with as much of courage as his brandy-flask would hold, in the stern of the punt, while the other used the pole.

It was, as Stanhope had said, as light as day; every jut and coign of the cottage, every stone of the bridge, stood out in strong relief as they slid up stream. The wind had chopped to the east, and was blowing sharply, so that the trees that fringed the steep right bank of the river shivered and swayed; but down in the sheltered channel it was scarcely felt, though the stream bore here and there a silver curl that marked a wavelet, and against the broad flat prow of the punt the water chafed and whitened angrily. It was hard work pushing against wind and stream, and Stanhope enjoyed it; and when he ceased from his exertion, it was never to rest, but to gaze eagerly about in search of those who had preceded them.

"I see nothing of those rascals," exclaimed he presently; "I am afraid they have done their work, and put their boat up at the mill; in that

case, they will escape us, confound them, for I suppose one must catch them in the very act, eh?—that's the law, isn't it?

'Of course it is,' replied the would-be county magistrate; 'though I must say I should have rather enjoyed a tussle myself.'

'Hush! be quiet!—we shall have them yet; I hear something.' And Stanhope noiselessly pushed the boat beneath a bluff of the right bank, where it could lie in shadow; above them the steep rose sheer, with one strong sapling growing from it almost at right angles, so that the branches dipped to within a few feet of them.

'What a strange noise that is, Blackburn. If it was warmer weather, I should have said that it was distant thunder.'

His companion, who did not care what it was, so long as it was not poachers engaged in breaking the law, and thereby inviting deeds of violence, expressed his opinion that whether warm enough or not, it *was* thunder, and 'deuced near thunder too. A storm is brewing,' said he, 'and it's my idea we had better get home at once, with dry skins.'

'A storm, with a sky like that! Pooh!—nonsense! Hark! there's a horse coming down the gorge, and at full gallop too; it must have got loose, and been frightened at that noise; and I don't wonder. How it swells and roars! God of heaven! can the reservoir have burst?'

'The what?' cried William, starting from his seat with such a piercing yell, that, even in that moment of anxiety, Stanhope stared at him speechless with sheer amazement. His face, though in shadow, shewed as white as though the moonlight were full on it, and his eyes seemed to be starting from their sockets. But at that same instant another spectacle presented itself—a horse and rider at full speed came round an angle of the opposite bank, and thundered down the road. It was John Denton, riding as if for life.

'What has happened?' cried Stanhope; 'for God's sake, tell us.'

'The embankment's gone, and the water is coming down,' roared the other. 'Up the bank, or you are dead men!' And he did not even turn his head, but was out of sight before the echo of his words had died away.

Then, for the first time, the thunder of the torrent broke unmistakably on their ears. Stanhope sprang at the drooping sapling, seized a branch, and swung himself a few feet up the bank, not nearly far enough, as he well knew, for safety; but then he stopped, for William did not stir. 'Up, up, Blackburn; there is not an instant to lose. Don't you hear the flood coming down?'

Yes, he both heard and saw; for, following the direction of his eyes, the other beheld, just in the act of rounding the next reach of the little river, a huge wall of water, forty feet high as it looked, and crowned with foam, which came on *en masse* with an incredible swiftness, and the roar of a hundred seas. Stanhope turned, and digging feet and fingers into the hard cliff, struggled desperately upwards to the summit. Though even then scarce feeling secure, he could not resist the terrible attraction of the spectacle, but lying at full length upon the cliff-top, peered down upon the ruin beneath. His late companion was standing in the same spot, not, as he had expected to see him, paralysed with terror, but gesticulating vehemently,

and apparently (though nothing could now be heard but the fury of the flood) ejaculating something at the top of his voice. He was pointing to the creaming top of the hurrying wall, where he seemed to see some object visible only to himself. Then, as the mighty mass swept by him, and him along with it, he suddenly threw up his hands, and once more, ere he was whelmed in the wave, that piercing shriek rang out above its thunderous roar. The next instant, a river was rushing by, nearly on a level with the spot where Stanhope lay, and at the rate of some twenty miles an hour, in place of the babbling little Curlew.

'Thank God, she is safe at Mosedale!' ejaculated Stanhope; 'but alas! for poor Ellen.'

GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

GREENWICH HOSPITAL, the grand old place which we all so much admire during our trips up and down the Thames, and which really is one of our finest buildings, is undergoing a transformation—not architecturally, but socially. We shall see there fewer and fewer of the blue-coated veterans who remind us of the days when steam was in its infancy. There have been three periods in the history of the building—its gradual construction by kings and queens; its long-continued employment as a habitation for old worn-out seamen; and its gradual desertion, owing to the substitution of the out-pension system for that of the in-pension.

Built by kings and queens, we say. This was really the case to a considerable extent. A portion of the site was once occupied by that suburban palace which, after being in favour with most of the Tudor sovereigns (some of whom were born there), constituted Queen Elizabeth's *Pleasance*. We hear very little about it during the reigns of James I. or Charles I., or during the Commonwealth. In the time of the Merry Monarch, however, the old *Pleasance* was pulled down, and commencement made with the present structure. Although Inigo Jones was not the actual architect, his ideas were present to the mind of his pupil Webb, by whom the plans were prepared. Three reigns at least elapsed before the edifice was substantially completed; but happily the same architectural character was preserved throughout. It is a grand series of courts and broad avenues, separating four fine clusters of buildings, known as King Charles's, King William's, Queen Mary's, and Queen Anne's quarters. The two quarters or clusters bordering on the river have been, until recently, almost wholly given up to the officials who were supposed to manage the Hospital, but who really had very insufficient work imposed on them. The other two quarters, nearest the Observatory hill, contain the Painted Hall, the Chapel, the wards for the pensioners, the dining hall, and the kitchens.

This was the building which, after some of the Stuarts had resided occasionally in the north-west quarter of it, became an asylum for seamen of the royal navy. Mary, the queen of William III., is credited with the suggestion of this plan. Never was an institution supported by a more heterogeneous variety of revenues than this has been. First, donations were given by royal and princely personages; then others by nobles and wealthy subjects; then a tax of sixpence a month was levied on all the seamen in actual service; then the forfeited

estates of traitors and rebels were appropriated; then parliamentary grants were made; and then fines and penalties of numerous kinds were handed over to the Commissioners—including unclaimed prize-money, deserters' and forfeited prize-money, smugglers' fines, a percentage on the freight of gold and silver carried by royal ships, and at one time a portion of the coal-duty. For a century and a half, even the sailors of the mercantile marine, although receiving no benefit from Greenwich Hospital, were compelled to subscribe their sixpence a month towards its support; but this was commuted, a few years ago, by an annual parliamentary grant of twenty thousand pounds. So large have been the receipts during a period of a hundred and seventy years or thereabouts, that the invested capital of the Hospital now amounts to a sum of great magnitude. We have the accounts for 1868 before us; and from them we learn that there is (in round numbers) £1,000,000 stock in the 3 per cent. consols, £1,500,000 in the 3 per cent. reduced, and other stock, shares, and money out on loan to the amount of £4,000,000—making altogether a very near approach to three millions sterling, all yielding annual interest or dividend. This interest and dividend are augmented by the rental of estates, and by the government grant, to a total sum not very far short of *two hundred thousand a year!*

During one generation after another, the wards at the Hospital were occupied by seamen of the royal navy, incapacitated either by wounds and accidents, by illness or old age. When one of those had gone through the formalities necessary to obtain admission (and they were rather troublesome to unlettered men), he was put in receipt of the requisites for existence—food, clothing, and lodging—together with a trifle in the shape of pocket-money. The old knee-breeches and cocked-hats of Queen Anne's time remained in use at Greenwich long after their abandonment by the other classes of society; but whether knee-breeches or trousers, whether cocked-hats or wide-awake hats, the old fellows have always been pretty warmly and comfortably clothed. As to their lodging, each man was assigned to a particular ward. The ward was a long gallery divided into compartments of different sizes, containing one, two, three, or four beds each. Each bedroom was called, in sailor phrase, a cabin; but it was little more than a sleeping-place, seeing that the men were not allowed to eat any of their meals there, nor to lie in their beds in the daytime. Some of the old fellows were fond of decking out their cabins with curious odds and ends, mementoes of foreign adventures. As to food, the men were summoned thrice a day to the dining-hall. The breakfast was (in later days, not originally) cocoa and bread; the dinner consisted of alternations of roast meat, boiled meat, soup, boiled puddings, baked puddings, broth, and vegetables, varied according to the days of the week and the season of the year; the supper (which served also as tea), bread, butter, and tea. Two pints of beer a day were allowed, and a shilling a week for tobacco and little trifles of miscellaneous kinds.

If the old Greenwich pensioner had been *contented and unmarried*, such a provision of board and lodging and clothing was by no means bad. But the men were not exactly happy. Most of them yearned for a little more freedom, a little

more mixing with the busy world, a little less of the solemn dulness which always hung about the grand old building. So few of them had any fondness for books, even if they could read, that the library was very little used by them; and the authorities provided hardly anything in the form of amusements. Jack, in fact, was made a sort of monk in his old age, shut up in a monastery; and he didn't like it. Those of them who were married were rather miserably placed in regard to wife and children. Even so recently as ten years ago, there was no provision made by the state for the family of the married pensioners—except a portion of the broken victual from the dining-hall. The pensioner's wife was obliged to support herself and children, for he had nothing to give them. The only way he could manage was this: he had a choice of receiving tenpence a day instead of the regular three meals in the dining-hall; he was allowed to be absent from the hospital at meal-times; and his tenpence a day, *plus* a shilling a week pocket-money (making about seven shillings a week altogether), was all that he had to feed himself and to support his family. Many of the women worked as charwomen or washerwomen in and near Greenwich, but many of them became chargeable on the parish; and as the children were still more ignored by the state than the wives, some of them fell into evil courses, and grieved the hearts of the poor old fellows, who were powerless to help them.

In 1860, a series of reforms began. What was wanted was—to lessen the enormous cost of management; to add a little to the very scanty money pittance of the inmates; to improve the out-pension system, for those who might wish to quit the Hospital; and to do something for the wives, widows, and children of the old men. There used to be so many admirals, commodores, captains, lieutenants, and other naval officers quartered upon Greenwich Hospital, and provided with comfortable apartments within its walls—nominally to attend to the old pensioners, but really with scarcely any duties—that they absorbed one-half of the entire building, and made a deep inroad on the funds. Many useful changes have, however, gradually been made in this system. Then, as to the pocket-money, it was raised from one shilling a week to two, three, or four, according to the rank which the man had held in the royal navy. The married pensioner had an extra two shillings a week given to him, to aid in supporting his family; and still another two shillings if his children were motherless. The wives had medicines and medical assistance placed within their reach, and schools for the children were aided if not actually provided. The men had another privilege awarded to them, which they greatly relished; they were allowed to visit their homes for six weeks at a time, at stated intervals, taking with them all their pocket-money and ration-money—quite a fortune for the old bucks. But the great change of all has been in the substitution of out-pensions for in-pensions. It became gradually but certainly known that the men—except those who were really decrepit, or had no relatives or friends to go to—preferred the former to the latter; and that the change would be advantageous rather than otherwise to the nation generally. The Duke of Somerset drew up a memorandum of suggestions in 1864; and a committee of skilled officials

developed a complete scheme in 1865, for working out these results. One-half or two-thirds of the pensioners were, by degrees, to quit Greenwich Hospital, and support themselves in any way they might select, by means of an increased out-pension; none were permanently to remain, unless they were very infirm, or had no friends to go to. The out-pensioners are ten or twelve thousand in number, and receive a few shillings a week each, varying in amount according to the rank the man had attained, whether common seaman, able seaman, petty officer, or the like. An arrangement was made that all the men above fifty-five years of age should have an addition of about ninepence per day to their pensions; and that any of the in-pensioners who left the Hospital should at once become entitled to these advantages.

What has been the result of these changes, to the pensioners themselves and to Greenwich Hospital? Readers of the *Illustrated London News*—that storehouse of pictorial gossip—will perhaps remember a woodcut in 1865, representing the departure of a body of pensioners from Greenwich, in omnibuses provided by the government. It was merely one scene in a very extensive exodus. No sooner did the pensioners hear of the new Admiralty plan, than most of them hailed it with delight; and something like one thousand (out of fourteen hundred) have taken their departure from the establishment.

Very recently, the Admiralty have brought forward a plan for carrying out still more completely the intentions above noticed. They say: 'The key-note of the policy of 1865 is so to administer the revenues of the Hospital as to make the money, set apart for the advantage of seamen incapable of service, go as far as possible in the direction most agreeable to the navy itself; that is to say, that the greatest number of seamen and marines should be benefited in the way which they themselves would individually prefer, and which would most adequately carry out the original intentions of the royal founders of the institution.' In the year just named the in-pensioners were reduced from 1382 to 395, and very few of them have since applied for re-admission. The plan is to be carried out to a still greater extent, so as to leave in the building only so many pensioners as can be accommodated in certain outbuildings known as the Infirmary and the Somerset Ward—virtually clearing out all the four grand clusters of the original building. Some of the regular old inmates, incurable or broken down, will remain; some, received temporarily for medical treatment, will be well cared for at the expense of the institution until cured; and all the rest will be offered grants which, combined with their naval pensions and Greenwich pensions, will make up an annuity of thirty-six pounds ten shillings a year for life. Few of them are absolutely friendless out of doors, and there will be many a home glad to welcome Father Jack or Grandfather Benbow, especially when he brings fourteen shillings a week with him. Even the Infirmary itself, it is believed, will be emptied in a few years; for every invalided and decrepit pensioner will be offered the option of a money equivalent, if he would prefer to live among his friends. Even at the best of times, numbers of seamen who have been wounded, and perhaps injured for life, in the public service, have been left unprovided for, owing to formal rules and techni-

cilities connected with the navy; but the Admiralty now entertain a hope that, owing to the vastly improved appropriation of the funds, 'parliament will have the assurance that no man who has long served his country at sea, or who has been invalided from the service, need become an inmate of a workhouse.' It is a shame to us that such words should be at all necessary; but we are fortunately not too old to learn. In 1859, the cost of one thousand six hundred in-pensioners ran away with one hundred thousand pounds, so extravagant was the expense of management, leaving nothing at all for out-pensions; in 1868, about four hundred in-pensioners and forty thousand pounds establishment charges left sixty thousand pounds for out-pensions; in future there may probably be two hundred inmates, all told, and there will be ninety thousand pounds a year for out-pensions.

As to the fine old building itself, the Admiralty purposely abstain from any present appropriation of it. It is to be kept in repair and insured, and applied to any such 'public purposes as Her Majesty's government may determine;' but (mark the proviso) 'the Admiralty shall have power to reclaim it for hospital purposes in the contingency of a naval war breaking out.' Many well-wishers of our seafaring classes have urged the government to hand over Greenwich Hospital to the mercantile marine generally, for sick and invalided seamen of trading ships; but the proviso above quoted interferes with this. There are, however, other arrangements planned, one whereby the admirable *Dreadnought* institution will probably be benefited out of the Greenwich funds; and another for giving small pensions to such merchant seamen as paid the Greenwich sixpence for ten or more years.

A MORASS ADVENTURE.

In the latter part of last summer, a scanty purse led me, in company with some relatives, to spend my holidays at a little village on the Welsh coast, out of the ordinary beat of tourists, but otherwise remarkable for nothing but its general air of bleakness and sterility. The place was very quiet, and the lodgings were cheap, and tolerably comfortable. These essentials being secured, we had to put up with the scenery, which was not very attractive. A long low line of beach, surmounted by a high pebble ridge, leading on the one hand to the foot of some bold jutting cliffs, and on the other losing itself in an estuary; behind this, a black and dreary-looking bog, stretching three or four miles inland, and intersected in every direction by wide, artificial ditches, and deep, natural fissures connecting the inky pools. A small river flowing into the estuary divides the bog, its course being marked by mounds of peat, cut from the firmer ground which forms its banks. Branching out at right angles to the river are other lines of peat-stacks, following the course of the larger drains, which herald the attempt to cultivate the dreary waste.

This was the view I beheld, as, standing one evening on the top of the stony ridge, I faced eastward. The sinking sun threw my shadow far over the bog, distinctly seen as it fell over the gilded rushes and the crimsoning pools. I had been

strolling out with my gun, in the hope of adding some specimens to my cabinet, and was thinking of returning homewards, when a long-legged heron slowly sailed high overhead, in the direction of the river. I watched the bird till it alighted near one of the peat-stacks, and carefully noting the spot, I proceeded to a careful stalk, hoping to secure an acquisition. I contrived to get within seventy yards of the heron, and as there was no cover of any kind nearer, I lay down behind the last mound I had reached, and with finger on the trigger, watched patiently, in the hope that my quarry would feed towards me. I was not disappointed: it gradually approached some yards nearer my hiding-place, and then either caught sight or scent of me, for it suddenly rose, but in so doing came within range. Bang! went both barrels. Uttering a hoarse croak, the heron flew heavily away, keeping close to the ground, and evidently hard hit. I sprang up and followed, jumping the ditches, and avoiding the soft ground as best I could. During one particularly long jump, I lost sight of the heron for a moment; I caught sight of it again just in time to see it fall to the earth as softly as a snow-flake, and lie still with wings outspread to their full stretch. Between the bird and me, however, there was a crevasse wider than any I had yet leaped, and a dozen yards on the other side lay the object of my pursuit. The black slimy sides of the ditch overhung the water, which lay deep and still some six or seven feet below, and a few yards to the right connected with a large pool, having equally high and muddy banks. To the left was a labyrinth of similar ditches. Some distance in front, a broader and straighter crack in the flat expanse shewed where the river lay. The bank on which I stood was a foot or two higher than the opposite bank. I describe the situation thus minutely in order to make the reader understand what afterwards happened.

Not liking to lose the prize so nearly in my grasp, I resolved to risk the jump. Laying down the gun, and taking my coat off, I made the effort, and cleared the ditch, only, however, by a few inches. I secured the heron, and smoothing its beautiful plumage, but little injured by the shot, threw it across to the bank from which I had just come. Then, on looking around, I found myself in a sort of *cul de sac*. The bit of firm ground on which I stood was an island, and the only way of escape was the one by which I had arrived. Having to 'take off' from a lower level, it was much harder to get back than it had been to come; but as there was no alternative, it had to be tried. I did not leap quite far enough, and pitched with hands and knees together against the edge. There was no vegetation to catch hold of, and after hanging on the balance for a few moments, vainly clutching at the mud, I fell backwards with a heavy splash into the water.

Fortunately, I am a good swimmer, and at first, while treading water, the ludicrousness of the affair alone struck me; but when I began to see that it might be difficult to get up those slimy, overhang-

ing banks, I must confess I felt rather frightened. It was impossible to get out at the spot where I had fallen in. I swam farther up the ditch, and trying to bottom it, felt my feet touch the soft tenacious mud, that gave no support, but was ten times more dangerous than the water. The water became shallower as I struggled on, but the muddy bottom refused to give me a standing-place, and the muddy sides afforded no hold for my hands. It at last became so shallow that I had to turn on my back to avoid kicking the mud as I swam, and when in this position, I could push my arms into it with almost as much ease as I could push them through the water; but to draw them out again was far from easy. With a horrid fear of being unable to extricate myself from the mud, and of a slow suffocation, I made a sudden dash back into the deeper water, and tried the other ditches, only to be repulsed in the same manner. I swam round and round the pool, seeking for an outlet, and beginning to feel my boots and clothes very heavy. Even now I involuntarily smiled at the comparison which suddenly occurred to me between myself in this plight and a mouse swimming round a bucket of water; but the thought that I too, like it, might be swimming for my life soon drove all ludicrous thoughts out of my head.

Matters now began to look very serious, when I saw a root or branch of some long-buried tree projecting out of the bank. I caught hold of it; but it was not strong enough to enable me to lift myself out of the water. All that I could do was to support myself with my hands just sufficiently to keep my head above the surface. I took this opportunity of kicking off my boots.

Up to this time, I could scarcely realise my position; but now the conviction began to dawn upon me that I might never again see the mother and sisters I had left in the cottage a mile and a half away. I looked up at the sky, in which the twilight was fast giving place to the moonlight, and across which the clouds were merrily driving before the evening breeze; and then I looked at the black and slimy walls which hemmed me in, and felt as though I were about to scream with terror. From my childhood, I have always had a horror of confinement of any kind. I have felt strangely uncomfortable when I have been persuaded into exploring a cave, or when I have been shewn through a prison. This feeling I felt now more strongly than the fear of drowning. To die hemmed in by those gloomy walls would be terrible.

To add to the weirdness, a hollow booming sound, almost amounting to a roar, ran through the quivering bog, intensified to me, no doubt, by my imprisonment in the heart of the moss. This, though I had never heard it before, I knew to be the note of the bittern. During the night, it was repeated several times, and anything more weird and dismal it would be hard to imagine.

I had not as yet thought of shouting, but I now did so till I was hoarse. The only answer was the eerie scream of the curlew. The improbability of any one being near enough to hear me so late, struck me, and I desisted from the useless labour. The stillness was intense, broken only at rare intervals by the bittern or curlew. How long I clung to the branch, I do not know. Fortunately, the water was not cold. The clouds had cleared away, and the moon, near the full, shone brightly. Had

it been dark, my courage must have given way, and I should most probably have sunk. As it was, I cannot say that I quite despaired of a rescue in some way or other. If I could only hold out till morning, some one might, I conjectured, come for the purpose of carrying away the turf sods, and might see my coat and gun, which would lead to a search. I had not much hope in any search from the village; I had started in the direction of the cliffs, my favourite evening haunt, and I fancied that would be the direction the searchers would take. As the night wore on—oh, so slowly—with the moon so calmly gliding through the stars above me, I fell into a kind of stupor, and I can distinctly remember repeating scraps of verses totally unconnected with each other. From this state, I was aroused by the loud note of some night-bird, probably an owl, and found my arms very stiff from holding on to the root; while my legs felt like weights of lead suspended beneath me. While trying to change my position, I fancied I heard the gurgling sound of running water, and that not far off. I listened intently, and found it was no fancy. Water was evidently running into the pool, and I saw by the root I was clinging to that the water had risen some inches.

A cheering hope sprang up within me, as it flashed across my mind that the tide must be rising, and that the pool must have an outlet into the river.

The thought infused new life into me, and I struck out in the direction of the sound. Then, to my intense joy, I saw distinctly, in the clear moonlight, that the water was streaming in fast through several small inlets, and pouring in quietly and steadily, through one of the ditches I had previously swum up. I knew that if the tide rose another foot or eighteen inches, I could by treading water fast, spring up so high as to be able to catch hold of the top of the bank, and so swing myself up. I knew also that the water could not possibly begin to flow into the bog-pools until it was nearly high tide. Returning to my resting-place, I watched anxiously, the prospect of speedy deliverance banishing all weariness. The water continued to pour in steadily and in greater volume. The dawn was now breaking, and I had not much longer to wait. The water had ceased flowing, and the bank in one place was barely five feet above the water. Taking a long breath, I let myself sink low, and then treading water as strongly and quickly as possible, I threw half my body above the surface of the pool, and caught the top with one hand. Before the soft earth had time to crumble beneath my weight, I had obtained a firmer grasp with the other hand, and in another moment stood on the moss—saved, drinking in with eager gasps the fresh air of the morning.

The white haze was rapidly clearing away, and through it I saw five or six men hurrying towards me. I have a confused idea of being helped to my lodgings, and of afterwards telling my adventure to many eager questioners.

The soaking I had had, and the exposure to the unhealthy mists which rise from the morass in the night, caused an illness for a time, but the effects soon wore off.

The heron is stuffed, and adorns my cabinet, unconscious of the revenge which overtook its destroyer.

THE EJECTMENT.

THE dusty road is fringed with green;
The hedges shelter from the heat;
Above, the woodbines blossom sweet;
Below, the toiling ant is seen.

And in the hedge, that rises high
Above the tangled grass and flowers,
A little bird beguiles the hours
With quiet homely minstrelsy.

It sings as day is drawing nigh,
Or when the idle noon is bright,
Or when the purple fringe of night
Is rising in the eastern sky:

Scarce noticed—yet perchance its song
Makes weary feet forget to ache,
Or dull despair again to take
Some hope and strength to toil along;

Or merely serves to bring a smile
On faces never touched by care—
On hearts that have not known despair,
To shed a brighter joy awhile.

But use must rule: the woodman's bill
Clears the green bank—the bird has fled,
In other boughs to hide its head,
The while its former haunt is still.

Yet hard to think another shade
Can be as loved as that one, where
It watched the primroses appear,
The springing of each tender blade.

Another hedge may bloom more sweet,
O'er richer fields be heard its strains,
But sweeter than all these remains
The memory of its first retreat;

And when alike the new and old
Fade in the autumn, and the blast
Clears the thick trees, the flowers are past,
The grass is withered with the cold;

Some pity rises in the mind,
To view the songster, silent now,
Seek shelter from the driving snow,
Or shiver in the cutting wind.

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